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PLANTATION LAYS, &c.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

PLANTATION LAYS

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

BELTON O'NEALL TOWNSEND, A. B., and
Attorney at Law.

"Mr. Bret Harte is credited with the statement that the South offers special advantages to the novelist. He might truly have added, to the poet also."

Atlantic Monthly, Feb'y, 1878, Pg. 250.

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DEDICATION.

MR. W. D. HOWELLS:

Not only am I indebted to you more than to any other literary friend for assistance, kindness and attention, but also for frequent encouraging and flattering expressions such as these: "I have no doubt that your destiny is literature. * * * You have already made an impression which few men of your age have done, and you have but to go on in the course you have taken. * * * Do you know that they [my prose productions, anonymous or under *noms de plume*] have been made the subject of wide editorial comment in the North?"

As some token of gratitude, I beg to inscribe to you these few poems—the rather limited crop (though secretly the real life-work) of twenty-nine ambitious years; and all the more is it appropriate in that the longest of them, "Wild With All Regret," was originally instigated (along with much not in verse) by another sentence of yours in a letter to me: "Why not try something in the way of a very realistic story of South Carolinian life? I am sure that you have the materials for it." In confirmation of which inference of yours, by the way, Longfellow (to whom was sent the MS. of about one-third of these verses before his death) also wrote me: "One thing strikes me very favorably in reference to your poems: I see that you have chosen subjects of local interest and written about things that lie close around you. That is a great secret and promise of success. We write best of things into which we can put our hearts. But pray don't speak of the 'despised South'—[I had in my letter referred to its position

in literature.] Call it the beautiful South and write of its beauties. That will interest us all." Most sincerely do I hope his assertion will be vindicated by the reception of this volume, where I have attempted to write of the beauties of the South, and that I may succeed in "interesting you all" at the North, as well as those of whom I crave a nearer audience. Though, as you are aware, and as I hope the public can discern from the face of my verses, I am fond enough to aim far higher than at being the poet of a section, a faction or a subject. Yet in regard to my acquaintance with Southern life, I will say, that in the main poem here printed I have endeavored to give, as it chances, a true picture of the excesses during Reconstruction of the blacks. If its reception convinces me that you and the public still think me possessed of materials and capacity for writing stories of South Carolinian life, I may publish others, mainly prose, and will always endeavor, as here, to fearlessly set forth the doings, the faults and the good traits of both races, from the cold, impartial standpoint of the student, the scholar and (I hope) the cosmopolitan; trying to

"Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice."

THE AUTHOR.

Florence, S. C., Feb'y 22, 1884.

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Plantation Lays.

WILD WITH ALL REGRET;

A TALE OF RECONSTRUCTION.

I'll not invoke the Muses,
  But with a sheriff's sale,
A very homely matter,
  You may think, will start my tale.
Yet there is not a subject
  You can find in all romance
More tragic than the auction
  Of an old inheritance.
The Berkeleys were a family
  Whose name from earliest age
Of Carolina's annals
  Appears on every page.
Before the war, their bondsmen
  By the hundreds could be told,
And the land was half a district[1]
  Which their head alone controlled.
At peace his slaves were freedmen,
  His lands were on his hands,
As the present of an elephant
  In Eastern story stands.
For them there was no market,
  Yet they were under tax,

Which simply confiscated,
  Yet would yearly greater wax.
Plantation on plantation
  Beneath the hammer fell,
Till the sheriff advertised at last
  He must the homestead sell.
"The Oaks" was what they styled it,
  A beautiful estate,
In all the Southern country
  You would hardly find its mate.
And it, for generations,
  Had passed from head to son,
Among the Berkeley people,
  Ere their fortunes were undone.
They tried to chill the bidding,—
  For land was no demand,
And only speculators
  Were apt to be on hand :
A set of sharks who waited,
  On every day of sale,
During all of Reconstruction,
  Round the court house steps and jail,
In hopes to catch a bargain,
  And for a farthing buy
The home of widows, orphans,
  And turn them 'neath the sky.
And though I think it error
  When aught the law o'errules,
These men were sometimes beaten
  By their persecuted tools;
Or told (as by these Berkeleys,
  While the advertisement ran,)
"'Twas best on this occasion

For them to have no plan ;
'Twas meant to buy the property,
At lowest price 'twould bring,
For Berkeley's wife—the owner
Could thus to homestead cling."
So off they stood, like vultures
Which circle round the sky,
While men stay near to corpses
That still unburied lie.
But at the last a rumor
Began to stir and grow,
That there would be a bidder,
Whom Berkeley knew his foe.
He was the county senator,
Had Bureau-Agent been,
And once, in course of duty,
Knocked the Oaks to enter in.
They spurned him from the doorway,
When they heard his hated name,
And told him the dogs should tear him,
If ever again he came.
He was termed a carpet-bagger,
For he came within the State
With one valise's contents,
But intent t' accumulate.
And fortune in battalions,
Not singly, sent her gifts,
As she's wont to do with blessings,
Or ills, as humor shifts.
For Whitmire soon held office,
Which once the Berkeleys filled,
While horses, rooms and equipage
In thrift proclaimed him skilled.

First Monday dawned; to traffic
Crowds ever come that day, [1a]
On foot, or horse, in buggy,—
Drink sometimes makes affray.
The Berkeleys' friends and kindred,
Well mounted men and brave,
Came early to the Court House,
With talk and aspect grave;
With Whitmire came a rabble
Of black militia there,
To which the band of Falstaff
Would very well compare.
A fife and drum made discord,
No step was ever kept,
At moves and rifle handling
An Upton would have wept.
These soldiers would, in conflict,
Have scattered quick and blind,
But the Cavaliers were conscious
Of the mighty North behind.
The auction was exciting,
The Berkeley party bid
Their utmost means, but Whitmire
Their very best outdid.
To raise a dollar strained them
Than fifty once far worse,
And very low he gained it,
'Mid many a muttered curse.
Then his troops, with mighty cheering,
Paraded up and down,
A dozen times each highway
And the public square in town.
Each sullen white was hooted,

And while they marched in rank,
Large colored crowds beside them
Ran on, with curious prank.
With apish tricks, preceded
A clown, upon an ox,
While women halloaed "Glory!"
And, dancing, flapped their frocks.
Each white aside stood darkly,
And scarcely yielded way,
If on him in their marching
The column chanced to stray.
Till sunset lingered Berkeley,
With others used to rule,
And checked a dozen riots,
And kept the young men cool.
He rode away at twilight,
When half the crowd was gone,
And found the highways streaming
As he to th' Oaks went on.

His wife and daughter waited,
At their old residence,
All day to hear the tidings,
In weeping and suspense.
They ate but little dinner;
The dreary afternoon
Passed on the broad verandah
Until uprose the moon.
Their supper was dispensed with
Till Berkeley should arrive,
And finally to the gateway
They went adown the drive.
Old Chloe followed with them,

She had been the younger's nurse,
And had waited on the mother
With a love unbought of purse.
They reached the gate, with pillars
Surmounted high with balls,
And listened. Soon upon their ears
A distant murmur falls.
It came from towards the Court House,
And as it nearer drew,
They made it out militia,
Dispersing—drunken, too;
For they were yelling, hooting,
And talking most obscene,
And firing, now a rifle,
Then a pistol shot between.
The females closed the portal,
Inside withdrew a space,
In hopes the rabble would pass on
And not molest the place.
But they stopped afront the entrance,
And loud, derisive talked
Of how their hero, Whitmire,
Had Berkeley's bidding balked.
From this the trembling women
Their adverse fortune learned;
But rising grief by terror
Was quickly overturned.
On serenading Berkeley
(Whose absence seemed unknown)
The crowd resolved, and entered
The gateway, open thrown.
Of old who dared to visit
Without a pass was scourged,

But now, ere fled the women,
The mob around them surged.
It halted at their screaming,
But quickly ribaldry,
And shouting and derision,
Showed its hostility.
But suddenly a gallop
Was heard adown the road,
And Berkeley burst upon them,—
His face with anger glowed.
But if his rage was kindling,
At their trespass, thus begun,
What felt he on discovering
His dear ones near o'errun!
Forthwith there flashed his pistol,
And cries of fear arose,
As with a random volley,
Scattered his ebon foes.
Oblivious of their firing,
He sprang from off his steed,
And to the cowering females
Rushed headlong in his speed.
They saw his sudden entrance,
His perilous attack
Upon a brutish multitude,
Who did not weapons lack.
A gun ball struck the mother,
She sank in Chloe's arms,
And with one moan her soul hath flown
Far from this earth's alarms.
Her daughter rushed to aid her,
Saw the blood, and wildly fell
In fits of screaming, fainting,
Which weeks could hardly quell.

* * * *

The Oaks was splendid property,
But ample for a duke,
So Whitmire seized occasion
Th' old system to rebuke.
No land was owned by negroes,
As yet, though eager sought,
Then whites to sell them thought it
A shame, whate'er it brought.
(We learned full many a lesson,
In Reconstruction days,
And now sell white or negro,
Who can the money raise.)
So he cut half the property
Into a hundred farms;
To purchase them the freedmen
Came flocking up in swarms.
He sold them all they wanted,
For credit or for cash,—
(Though those who took on credit
Discovered they were rash.
He did not give them titles,
But simply a receipt,
And promised them the papers
When payments were complete.
Each moved upon his purchase,
Paid more, improved it years,
But found when Whitmire sold the Oaks,—
As afterwards appears,—
The gentleman who bought it
Owned each undeeded home,
And, but for generosity,

They must pay o'er or roam.)
These newly fledged freeholders,
To build upon their land,
Buy all their former cabins,
That in the quarters stand.
These quickly down are taken,
And carted piecemeal on
Each buyer's farm though distant,
And erected o'er anon.
Of quarters there were several;
The largest one was seen
Some furlongs from the mansion,
That crowned the whole demesne.
This quarter first was sold from;
And only a single house
Was left a half year after,
Your attention to arouse.
'Twas the overseer's dwelling,
Around it was a field
Where in the earlier era
The cabins were revealed.
Law gives the bankrupt homestead—
Of very humble kind,
Compared to the great mansion
That Berkeley left behind.
A thousand dollars only
The sheriff laid aside,
From what the Oaks was sold for,
This refuge to provide.
The court must make selection,
And Whitmire interfered,
To mortify the enemy,
Who at him once had sneered.

To place him in the cottage
Where his overseer had dwelt,
While Whitmire moved to the mansion,
Would be triumph keenly felt.
So this house, with fifty acres,
As the homestead was approved
For Berkeley, by a circuit judge
Whom Whitmire made and moved,
And vain protested Berkeley
And counsel that he paid,
The court was firm, and ordered
The investment to be made.
'Twas deep humiliation
To take for future home
A place so near the mansion
That he could see its dome.
Whither, of old, he'd lofty
Wave off late traveler
That lodging asked, if aspect
Might chance to give demur.
There were Berkeley, Allie, Chloe,
(Still faithful) went along,
He farmed the field allotted,
And brooded o'er each wrong;
He could not brook his fortune,
And tried to drown his woe
By drinking deep, a remedy
Oft tried by high and low.
And all the solemn lectures
The world will ever hear
Will hardly make us temperate,
When fortune serves severe.

So the alien and negro make revel
In the banqueting halls of the proud,
While the olden owner is toiling,
And the mother is wrapped in the shroud.
And the daughter dreamily looketh,
With her elbow at rest on the sill,
And her hand to her cheek, as she sitteth
Each day at the house on the hill.
Ah Christ! when was there such vision?
That slender, tall, beautiful form,
The lustrous eye and the wavy hair,
And the marble-cut, sinuous arm.
Yes, wavy her hair, for 'tis loose to the air,
And her dress is all crumpled and wild:
Ah, shame to the one who this fell work hath done,
Who hath crazed this magnificent child!
Yes, crazed!—for months she lingered
From the shock of her mother's death,
Her brain in whirl of fever,
On fire her panting breath.
They long scarce hoped to save her,
Yet at the last she rose,
But, alas! they found that madness
Had seized her in its throes.
They tenderly waited on her,
Her, father, Chloe, too,
And sometimes one called Willie,
Who had loved her, ere her rue.
She sits and mourns, but weeps not,
Her gaze is forever kept on
Her olden home in the distance,
Her thoughts on the days that are gone.
We think not how grateful is weeping,

The reason may hang on a tear,
For it giveth a vent to the feelings
Which, pent, into madness may flare.
Yet sometimes she'd roam to the churchyard,
And you'd hear the deep moan and the sigh,
As she gazed on a wooden headmark,
Though the tear glistened not in her eye.
That sculptureless grave contrasted
With its neighbors, marble crowned;
For a century here her kindred
Had made their burying ground;
But alone the murdered lady
Of all lay under the soil,
Without a shaft to tell you
She rested from her toil.

One day—a year from the auction—
Young Allie was thus at the grave,
And sat till the dews of evening
Began all things to lave,
Then, rising, her arms she foldeth,
And fixedly stares at the Oaks,
Which looms above the tree-tops,
Though the dusk her vision chokes.
At length she wildly starteth,
And throweth her right hand up,
And she swears some oath as solemn,
As if by the Holy Cup.
Then suddenly ceased her transport,
She left the graveyard old,
And rapidly walked and stealthy
Towards her home which had been sold.

* * * *

Between the Oaks and Court House
That night the meeting's held
Of the Loyal League, in forest
And swamp unclaimed of eld.
A stump sufficed for altar,
With stars and stripes 't was draped,
And laden with other emblems,
In certain order shaped;
The Bible, Constitution,
The Declaration, Sword,
The Ballot-box, and Sickle,
And Gavel there were stored.
No Censer with Liberty's Fire
Shone there,—as the ritual charged;
But a pine torch. Round this altar
Their circle was formed, and enlarged
By numerous truants, who entered
Past the sentinels posted around,
While the distant passer noticed
A wild and wailing sound—
Peculiar to negro singing
(Of which they justly brag,)
As they chanted "John Brown's Body,"
Or "We'll Rally Round the Flag."
But each prayer and exhortation,
Each oath and deep response,
Their gliding forms and shadows,—
All these the woods ensconce.
They take in several members,
With full and mystic rite,
Who are sworn to join the party
Which burst their bonds in might.
Savage and weird the picture,—

Salvator Rosa's brush
Had placed it on the canvas
Such way your breath to hush.
There first was trained the freedman
In politics, debate;
And taught to love "the Party,"
And his former masters hate.
There was instilled the lesson
That it was right in turn
To steal from white oppressor,
His residence to burn.
So nightly rose a flaming
Far o'er the land to warn
That negro torch had kindled
Some dwelling, gin or barn.
And with gun and baying watch-dog,
You lightly slept of night,
And dreamed of fire and burglar,
And wakened in affright.

But to-night their chairman's absent—
'Twas Whitmire held the place—
They missed his thorough knowledge,
And long familiar face.
They late dispersed. One cluster
To approach the Oaks began,
All black, except a couple
Of the carpet-bagging clan:
Some of the brood of vultures
Who, when the battling ceased,
Thronged to the field and gorged till they reeled
On their national garbage feast.
The negroes sang and holloaed,

Or made peculiar cries
Which Southrons nightly list to
As the negro homeward hies.
As they reached their homes they lingered,
Till very few were left
When they passed by Berkeley's cottage,
Where he dwelt of home bereft.
But then their uproar doubled,
As they marched along the street,
They cursed his dogs for barking,
And on his palings beat.
"The mad girl's not at her window,"
One of the party said;
Another rejoined: "Let's raid them,
Since for once we have caught her abed."
So when they had passed a little
Two of the crowd returned,
And a chicken and turn of fence rails
They bagged while they sojourned.
—Such were the persecutions
Of Reconstruction time—
No wonder there were Ku Klux,
No wonder there was crime!
I don't believe in bondage,
Though Carolinian true,
And now regret that on us
It ever cast its hue.
I hope in future era
To see the negro rise
To worth of mind and character
Which wins of life the prize.
But to turn him loose as master—
A child in freedom's ways—

And make his owners subjects,
Was this best way to raise?
God knows, perhaps 'twas better
At once to meet the shock;
Extract the tooth, and bolt the dose,
Not wear by drops the rock.
Wherever freedom dwelleth
A certain course she'll take,
Be sometimes charming fairy,
And sometimes groveling snake.[2]
I'd fain have seen the negro
Improve his chances great,
But he was simply human,
And met the general fate.
For all the course of history
Hath tended this to show:
That sudden revolutions
Are apt to backward flow.
It takes well nigh a century,
As proves each precedent,
One foot above the ocean
To raise a continent.
The dropping of a delta
Will take ten thousand years,
And countless ages to change rocks
To fertile hemispheres.
So, too, with social order,
With pleasures of mankind,
With all the thoughts and habits
Like ivy round him twined,
They will not change of sudden,
However hard you try,
But only after many

Generations onward fly.
Clothe the mule with skin of lion,
'Twill quickly come to pass
His braying will betray him,
And show him still the ass.
The cat may change to lady,
But when she sees a mouse,
She'll straightway leap upon him,
And not scream o'er the house.
You may shave and paint the leopard,
Whiten skin of Ethiop men,
But the spots and ebon color
Will soon push out again.
The sow will to her wallow,
To his vomit turn the dog;
And the devil's cloven foot appears,
Howe'er he tries to clog.
And men may raze a Bastile,
And use the guillotine
On many a proud aristocrat,
And on the king and queen,
But empire quickly follows;
Napoleon's worse than king;
And finally time's whirligig
The Bourbons back will bring.
The early Christians gloried
When their faith was made the state's;
But quickly found that baptism
Changed no man's likes or hates.
The awful Roman city
Named the universal church;
Of pagan rites and practices
The converts went in search.

They were told to break their idols
And bow to ideal God,
But 'tis ever human failing
At abstract things to nod.
So very soon the images
Of Virgin, Christ and saint
Were crowding Christian churches,
Bowed to without restraint.[3]
And it proved artificial,
Unnatural and wrong,
That blacks should rule the Saxon,
Through Northern aid too long,—
Like angry ape, or Titmouse,
With his thousands ten a year,
While the law of mighty England
Sustained him in his sphere.
The same blood welled in Southrons
As those Bostonians had
Who threw the tea in ocean,
With Indian guises clad;
And left alone, like spring bent,
They rose with mighty power,
And the negro ceased fantastic tricks,
And helpless 'gan to cower.

Well, our crowd went on commenting
Where Whitmire was to-night,
"He promised to come, at tea-time,"
Said one whose face was white;
"His family's in New England,
We others, with one design,
Left his house to-night for the meeting,
While he lingered to write a line."

Through fields of corn and cotton,
And—such the times—broomsedge,
The thoroughfare ran ere touching
The lawn's extended edge.
Then half a mile, the portal
At last before them stood
Where the mob on Berkeley's lady
Had wrought their work so good.
—I feel some disposition
Just here to paint the place,
For it was truly lovely,
And well deserves the space.
The people from a distance
Who travel in the South,
When we boast of former splendor,
Think we merely wish to mouth.
Our old ancestral homesteads
Are ne'er from railway seen,
But only swamps and pinelands,
Poor fields and buildings mean.
The old-time planters, fearing
Near growth of noisy town,
And owning horse and equipage
To ride to depots down,
Objected to surveyors
Running upon them close,
So that a line of railroad
E'er'd the poorest land engross.
But in each rural District
Some two or three estates
Were ever found, whose splendor
No pen exaggerates.
The balance of the County

Might stunted be and poor,
And unto every gentleman
Full many a slave and boor,
But that is simply stating
We did the North precede:
Our planters to your Vanderbilts
Had seemed in direst need!
I've strolled along Fifth Avenue,
Where fifty millionaires dwell,
Whose wealth the other million
New Yorkers' will excel.
And so with every country
That lies in human ken,
In England half the realty
Belongs to a hundred men.
A very few are happy,
A very few are rich;
But most of poor humanity
Is slaving in the ditch.
The strongest force in physics
Is found to be evolved
When the greatest heap of matter
Is consumed, and thus resolved.
So perhaps in mortal matters,
The keenest happiness
Is witnessed where our neighbors
Are put to most distress.
Oh! I have read and pondered
On each book that Darwin wrote,
And over Herbert Spencer
I once would fairly gloat,
And when on Nature gazing
I own they speak the truth,

That the strongest are the fittest,
And give the weakest ruth.
That through the boundless universe
All beings have one aim—
Men, insects, beasts and flowers—
To make each other game.
But though their observations
Have made the churchmen quake,
And the orthodox conclusions
As to Bible-science shake,
Though they've shown that nature's battling
As we all admit who view,
Yet is this struggling moral?
Does only good accrue?
I know that beast and savage
Will extirpate the weak,
But is nature's state the model
For civilized men to seek?
If so, then Herbert Spencer
Should have been impaled at once,
He was puny, and most people
Believed him impious dunce.
Closed up should be each hospital,
Each orphan house, free school,
Each means for dealing charity,
Each move against misrule.
Yes, leave mankind to nature,
Then Might alone is Right,
And those will take who have the power,
Those keep who've strength to fight.[4]
But all of human history
Has been a contest hard,
Of Right with Might, and Progress
Trying Nature to discard.

And the foremost men and nations
Have most of charity,
And, unlike the natural savage,
Guard e'en beasts from tyranny.
And whether God or human,
I know that Jesus Christ
Touched civilization's keynote,
In language apt and spiced,
When he said "Do unto others
As you'd have them do to you,"
And praised the good Samaritan
Who saved the wounded Jew.
Let Spencer reason, using
Every favorite thundering word,
(Which he's coining e'er, while censuring
The classics as absurd,)
But the pupil of his Ethics
May lay the book aside,
And kill or steal with conscience,
If his crime he can but hide,
Like the people of old Sparta
Who did not deem it aught
Of wrong to go a thieving,
Unless the thief was caught.
Like Offitt the Bread Winner,
Who felt a better man
When he had two men nigh murdered
In his money getting plan.

But this makes two digressions,
A thing I quite abhor;
Pray spare:—'t is first I've published
Unpruned by editor;

I've tried my wings and sported
In most unwonted glee,
Because 't is strange sensation
To feel at last I'm free.
Besides I do but copy
The modern novel's style,
Which stops the tale to moralize
So oft—'t is sometimes vile.
Yet of me've said some critics
(Not knowing e'en my name,)
"To the gift of closely following
His theme he has some claim."
Thanks; henceforth right I'll prove you,
Or try; so let's retrace
Our steps, and join the strollers,
Who had reached the Berkeley place.
The stately portal entered,
They took the avenue,
Which pierced the lawn of oak trees
And mat of Kentucky blue.
This passed, they reached the garden
Of flowers, 'twixt house and lawn,
When whom do they meet in its pathways—
Like a glorious dream of the dawn?
They stop, and glances mutual
Exchange, all know her well;
But the maiden onward passes,
And vanishes like a spell.
And they suddenly hear a crying,
As of some one in despair,
Half smothered, in the mansion,
Where there shines a brilliant glare!

A surmise—all go rushing
Up steps, 'cross balcony,
Through hall, and down to cellar,
Whence comes that awful cry.
The stair is barricaded,
With barrels, wood, *debris*,
And the heap is freshly fired,
But does not yet blaze free.
They do not stop or linger,
But rush to the attack,
The flames are soon extinguished,
But leave their mark of black.
Then the cellar quick is opened,
And gasping in his fright
They find their leader 'prisoned,
Who had missed the tryst to-night!
Ah, he will ne'er forget it!
His agony, despair!
When the maiden burst upon him,
And signalled to the stair;
And followed,—tea just over—
—Her pistol cocked in hand—
Till she turned the key upon him,
No help at his command.
The cellar in old era
Had held its store of wine;
But under its new owner
Had a very changed design.
He was militia-Colonel,
And for their armory
His cellar had been chosen,
As if by destiny.

And in it then was quartered
A store of uniforms,
Of rifles, bayonets, powder,
And cartridges in swarms.
And if that fire had lasted,
And burnt the Oaks to ground,
The explosion, like an earthquake,
Would have shaken the counties round.
She had seen by the straggling troopers
Her mother's life o'erthrown;
She knew their evil leader
Had made the Oaks his own.
She had heard the talk (in silence)
Of father and his friends,
When the new possessor altered
The old wine cellar's ends,
And she had watched the wagons,
Which, with militia throng,
And heaped with their equipments,
Passed to the Oaks along.
And she pointed to them, saying,
As she marched him in to-night:
"Your weapons killed my mother
But their owner now shall smite!"
She caged him with no exit,
And built a barricade
As for funeral pile, he trembled,
And vainly mercy prayed;
No word she ever uttered,
But when her task was done
She sat outside, in vigil,
Till half the night was run.
Then she struck a match, he heard it,

He screamed to her, to God,
Till he lost his breath, and his heart beat
In his breast like a thrasher's rod.

* * * *

Of course there was sensation,
Both very deep and wide,
When Allie's act was published,
As usual magnified.
The Stalwart press devoted
Some columns each per day,
To showing how rebellion
Again was in array.
And a motion passed the Senate
(See the Journal of that date),
At once t' appoint Committee
To go, and investigate;
With power to send for persons,
And papers, and to sit
In any distant city,
If the Oaks would not permit.
To the Probate Judge went Whitmire,
Intent to crush his foe,
And to the State Asylum
He swore that she should go.
The papers *de lunatico*
Are very quickly filed;
A day's set for the hearing,—
Her father's grief is wild.
And wild, too, is her lover,
Young Willie, who has clung
Through all to her since childhood;
And Chloe, too, is stung.

They importune their foeman,
  He swears to have no check;
All the State and Union army
  Are at his call and beck.
And ere the time appointed
  Full many a sleepless night
These faithful three pass weeping
  And praying in their plight.
But every thing was hopeless,
  The prison seemed her lot,
And there was naught could save her
  From the deep and thickening plot!

Your captors e'en now are assembling,
  To tear thee from all that was thine,
And I feel that your fingers are trembling,
  As I madly encase them in mine.
Ah! this of all yet is the hardest,
  And evils past number have thronged;
To part us, to take thee, my darling,
  Indeed, 't is the worst they have wronged.

You would linger all day by the curtain;
  To strangers you seldom gave heed;
Yet one step to rouse you was certain,
  And you heard it when service e'er freed.
For you blushed and were silent with worship,
  As I drew up my chair to your side,
And toyed with your ringlets, caressed you,
  And called you my Allie, my bride.

But all my fond visions are blighted,
  That reason will never return;
They bear you from those who delighted
  To tend you, to those who will spurn.
Yet nay! I know well that e'en strangers
  Will start when they gaze on your face,
And wait on you constant and tender;
  But the home-life they cannot replace.

And can it be that you will miss me,
As you pine in your cheerless brick cell ?
If we e'er meet again will you kiss me,
And know him who loved you so well ?
Yes ! absence ne'er conquers true passion ;
My heart will go with you afar,
And yours will stay with me, my darling,
Though they part us by distance and bar.

And we *will* meet ! ill lasts not forever !
A just God's in heaven above ;
And I feel that He'll suffer it never,
Such hate e'er to smother His love.
The spoiler shall yet meet with vengeance,
The bondsman he chastened for pride ;
And your reason shall come with the tide-turn,
And then I shall call you my bride !

Ah ! shame to you, shame to you !
Who would have believed
You'd e'er be so cruel
To those you'd aggrieved ?
You slaughtered their kinsmen,
You conquered their band,
You turned free their bondsmen,
And stole all their land.

You drove them from homestead,
The mother you crushed,
The daughter you maddened,
At nothing you blushed.
And now when the maiden
Does what she knows not,
She's dragged from her loved ones
—The prison her lot.

Ah, this is not justice !
—My brothers just freed,
Will you back up the alien,
E'en in his worst deed ?
Oh, no ! as God liveth
You should not do this ;
Ah ! have you forgotten
Your kindly old Miss ?

She came to the cabins
To visit the sick,
The girls for weddings
She ever would trick.
If a slave, in her presence,
Was doomed to the lash,
She'd beg for and save him,
With cheek like the ash.

But ah! the good lady,
Is laid in the grave!
The soft heart was broken,
That pitied the slave!
And now her poor daughter,
Of reason bereft,
Is all that old Chloe
Can claim to have left.

For I nursed her dear mother,
And then I nursed her;
And I'll cling to the poor child,
Though all men deter!
Alas! she now needs me
Far more than at first;
And if you should part us,
Your deed is accurst.

* * * * *

Well, over is the trial,
Where mighty crowd was seen,
Of course there was no contest,
No plea to intervene.
Her friends ask simply mercy,
But sternly are refused,
Though promising her freedom
Shall be ne'er again abused.
The mad-house is her sentence,
The judge adjourns the court,
A deadly silence follows,—
Man ask if this be sport?

Then such a storm arises
As seldom gathers head,
For hundreds swore they'd guard her
Until their blood ran red.
They snatched her ere the sheriff
Took charge, and marched away,
A colored *posse* followed
With very short delay;
Then the wildest scene of riot
Was witnessed in the town,
But when Saxon meets the negro,
The negro's quickly down.
In less than thirty minutes,
No colored man was seen,
Save two or three who lingered,
Stretched out upon the green.
And what became of Whitmire
No man exactly knew,
He disappeared like magic,—
To far off city flew.

That night a mystic column
Filed o'er the chiefest road,
On horses clothed with housings,
That to their ankles flowed.
Each rider too was hooded,
Each wore a gown and mask,
And each was strapped with weapons,
Ready for deadly task.
They steadfast onward traveled,
The negro quaked and feared,
Who saw that ghastly cavalcade,
As from his hut he peered.

But no one they molested,
That night; they traveled on
Till the first faint streaks of morning
Showed gloom was nearly gone.
Then the mystic column faded,
With night, as sun uprose,
And the news spread through the county
They had saved her from her foes.
To distant State they bore her,
For years none knew the place,
Because all through the country
Dwelt Berkeley's kin and race.
And she was gently cared for
Away from olden scenes,
And Whitmire never found her,
Though he freely lavished means.
Her father at his cottage
Dwelt on in quiet gloom,
While Chloe went with Allie,
To share her every doom.
I don't approve of Ku Klux,
Nor Nihilistic plan,
My blood is mainly English,—
Likes the fairly fighting man.
But I have seen oppression
So cruel, absolute,
I glow to hear of vengeance,
Though philosophy dispute.
And Allie, years thereafter,
When mind again was clear,
Would ever detest the cruel,
And the ones who domineer;

She was not consistent always,
—(Perhaps her reason still,
On the subject of a tyrant
Will always serve her ill.)
And though it seems strange fountain
From which to hear such creed,—
A Southern planter's daughter,
Not of the Commune breed,—
Yet I have heard her urging
That when oppressors smite,
It is right to make resistance,
"E'en," she'll sing, "with dynamite!

"Oh! take the awful tyrant
Whom the Russians call the Czar,
With his knout, police and army
And Siberian mines afar;
And take the wailing people,
Ever cowering in affright,—
And can you blame them turning
In despair to dynamite?

"Ah! all the world was startled,
When it heard his father's fate;
But a wife he had discarded,
For a mistress kept in state;
And to squander on her millions
Taxed a thousand homes to blight—
Oh think of this, and wonder
Why they threw the dynamite!

"What does the Czar with jewels,
When myriads are in need?
Why rules he sixty million
Purer men, of kindred breed?
Will he let them meet and organize
To give him equal fight?
—Oh, no! he strikes unfairly,
So they take to dynamite.

"Think on the Irish landlord—
Whose fathers robbed the land
From the father of his tenants,
Whose rights on bayonets stand.
A thousand squalid renters
Their little means unite
To buy him London's fatness,—
Till they rush to dynamite.

"O despots, tremble everywhere,
Your doom is knelling now!
For men have cool and stern resolved
No more to you to bow.
We will obey no ruler,
Save to choose we have the right;
And if he tries the hand of mail,
We'll fight with dynamite!

"We hail the name of Brutus!
We hail the name of Tell!
And own with bow and dagger
They served their tyrants well;
But a Gessler now, or Cæsar,
Will feel redoubled fright,
For the future Tell and Brutus
Will be armed with dynamite!

"In many a million hovel,
Or ghastly tenement,
Are a billion creatures starving,—
Though their lives are slaving spent.
Yet a Gould to cut their wages
E'er is watching like a kite,
And the public's damned by Vanderbilt,
—Despite their dynamite.

"Oh! Jesus tells the story
Of the good Samaritan,
Who, while the others passed aside,
Gave help to dying man.
So while around our firesides,
Where wealth and cheer delight,
Let's spare for human suffering,
—It may banish dynamite."

* * * * *

Our story takes a recess
Of six or seven years,
Ere Allie on the stage again
And at the Oaks appears.
To Whitmire come promotions
So great, that rural scenes
He quits, and seeks Columbia,
Where harvests fat he gleans.
A mansard roof receives him,
A fountain plays in front,
To sport with steed and landaulet
Is constantly his wont.
He sold the Oaks on moving,
And Willie's father bought,

The acres half were lessened,
But the house unchanged in aught.
'Twas opened warm to Berkeley,
Who both was far too proud
To take of alms, and t' enter
The Oaks no more had vowed.
Will's father had been lucky,
Some fortune he had saved,
And son, and father also,
Had well their troubles braved.
They went to work right nobly
Like many Southrons, then,
And proved not mere patricians,
But self supporting men.
(Oh, Northern people, watch it!
The coming Southern race,
In arts and money-making,
Are going to give you chase!
'Twas sternest of necessity
That forced them to the plow,
But of himself each Southerner
Can take the best care now.
Some of the olden manners
Could not sustain the fight,
And, moping, brooding, drinking,
Soon sank from public sight.
But now no work's degrading,—
Too many of the ton
Are plowing, clerking, teaching,—
All sneer at idle Don.
I now think slavery error;
Although the North must own

'Tis hardly found entitled
First at us to've thrown the stone.
You, too, had slaves once; tenements
Our negro quarters beat,
The master kept the aged—
Where's your laborer's retreat?
And, as usual with an evil,
It had its side of good,—
Half civilized the Afric
Brought to our neighborhood.
But the old Plantation era
Is passed fore'er away,
And I rejoice that slavery
Has seen its final day.
I see the State improving
In numbers now and wealth,
So wondrously, I own it:
"Our old life was not health!"
Our land is filled with engines,
With factories and mines;
And Progress, the iconoclast,
Is breaking olden shrines,
There's no one now can tarry,
No time is there for play,
For Satan takes the hindmost,
And the smartest wins the day.)

'Twas —76, and Hampton
His famous circuit rode,
And all the State with tumult
From hills to sea o'erflowed.
And when the hot election
Results in contest, doubt,

And Union bayonets grimly
Keep Hampton's party out;
But all the signs are pointing
To his success at last,—
Then Berkeley brings back Allie,
Regardless of the past.
And Chloe, old and feeble,
With her returns at length;
Still madness clings to Allie,
Though scarce with former strength.
She had been melancholy
And silent when away,
But remembered Berkeley's cottage,
As if not gone a day.
She showed some little gladness,
Then took her window seat,
And at the Oaks intently
She gazed with olden heat.
She warmly greeted Willie,
Her father, too, she knew,
But of her ancient neighbors
Remembered very few.
A week or two passed over,
Then words and posture showed
A strange hallucination
Within her forehead glowed.
She seemed like one expectant,
And ever waiting now,
And not with brooding sadness
As formerly to bow.
While now and then she'd murmur,
As if in self amaze,

"I thought I would have heard it
Long since, or seen the blaze."
And if she chanced to notice
One moving toward the Oaks,
To him she beckons warnings
And not to go invokes.
She evidently fancied
Her prisoner still secure,
And the *debris* still burning,
The loud explosion sure!
The doctors gave opinion,
A crisis was at hand,
When mania would forsake her,
Or turn to stronger brand.
Quite urgent were their cautions
To guard from every chance
Of sudden, strong excitement,
Which might th' event advance.

The papers meanwhile daily
Were filling every page
With burnings, stealings, shootings,
Such was the races' rage.
And all throughout the county,
Both main and private road,
Each night with red-clad horsemen,
Patrolling, overflowed;
And e'en the court house village
Was guarded, too, till day,
Yet many a conflagration
Still shone with reddening ray.
One night while dragged the contest
Her lover spent the eve

With Allie till his column
Should pass, when he must leave.
Quite mournful his reflections,
As he sat her hand in grasp;
"Oh! is there naught can save her,
And snatch from madness' grasp?
So young as yet, so lovely,
She stirs like music's self;
To cure her I would squander,
If mine, the wide world's pelf.
She wakes in me emotions
No other's sight can rouse,
My breast will e'er be vacant
If heaven our parting allows.
For my heart has been torn from my bosom,
And placed on her tender shrine,
God grant that her reason, like sunshine,
May break forth—and then she'll be mine."
But his comrades call, he leaveth,
While, with the weird look of a seer,
She says, "Good-night, 't is coming,
Revenge at last is near."

The column on their mission
Adown the road deploy,
And watch till all aweary
Their relief is hailed with joy.
As they repass the cottage,
They see by the light within
That Allie is still at the window,
And she starts at their passing din,
And open throws the sashes,
And utters loud the cry:

"Approach not! it is coming!
Revenge's sweet hour is nigh!"
Then she points to the old mansion,
Where all the horsemen stare,
And they start and cry of sudden,
For there shines a brilliant glare!
A streak of fire is stealing
And creeping up the house,
They gallop wildly to it,
And the sleeping inmates rouse.
The Oaks burns fast,—no buckets—
The reservoir on top
Has long been idle ornament,
About to pieces drop.
The match of negro prowlers
Had done its fatal work;—
They haunted bush and thicket
Would in your outgrounds lurk;
They'd dodge the patrol; watch-dogs
They'd hush with poisoned meat,
Then break, steal, fire, or outrage,
With Indian's noiseless feet.—
From all attempts to extinguish
They very soon withdrew,
And fell to moving furniture,
'Twas all that they could do.
Among the things they rescued
Was the famous cellar's store;
You'll feel surprised, as armory
To hear 't was used once more.
The Rifle Club would gather
At the Oaks as central place;
Of weapons, powder, cartridges
Was stored there many a case.

From wood-heap in piazza
The fire sprang, 't was found;
It traversed side and roofing,
Ere inside or to ground.
So all the cellar's contents,
And those of parlor, room,
They save before the dwelling
Is half of flames a tomb.
Then sadly from the garden
They look upon the blaze,
When sudden a mournful object
Attracts their wondering gaze.
'Twas the maddened maiden dancing,
Not far adown the lawn,—
Spread to breeze her tresses—
As lovely as a fawn.
And presently notes of music,
As sweet as a dying bird's,
Trilled from her lips of ruby,—
Though wild the stirring words:

"O tramp not on the serpent,
Or his venomous tooth will strike;
And kick not the sickened lion,
For strength may revive with dislike.
Throw down what you spurn with a caution,
For often there cometh recoil:
Be careful to stand from the building,
Your hands would tear down and despoil.

"You have trampled on the serpent,
And the weakened lion struck,
You have thrown us to earth with our fortunes,
—You have sipped the sweet chalice of luck!
But a bell in the distance is ringing,
And there flaps at your window a wing,
The dread form of vengeance is crouching,
And nothing will save from his spring!"

Her lover tried to calm her,
But wilder fast she grew,
And when the flames high-mounted,
Out from the lawn she flew;
She beckoned all to follow,
And cried: "'Tis here at last,
Flee far from the fated mansion,
In time to escape from the blast."
To all it was apparent
She thought her olden foe
Was still within the cellar,
Where she fastened him long ago;
And she was madly certain
The house with mighty noise
Would soon blow up, and kill him,
So at the gate she joys.
Then sudden, like the lightning,
Flashed a thought on Willie's brain,
And he hastens to call the gazers,
And his lucky device explain.
He had heard, he said, that one's reason
Is often awakened, when lost,
By the sudden seeing or meeting with things
Which your path in old time had crossed.
And if sudden and strong emotion
From its place first shook the mind,
If reshaken by passion severe as the first,
'Twill again to its place be consigned.
So he seized a keg of powder,
And wrapped it thick around
With several blankets, wetted,
Which lying round he found.
No words will stop, he warns them
To leave the dangerous place;

They go, and he waiteth patient,
Till he sees them off some space.
Then shouldering keg, he chargeth,
Mounts flaming porch, and throws
His burden far in the hall way
Where yet no fire glows.
Then off he springs and races,
As never he raced before,
Half charred with lapping flame-tongues,
And deafened by their roar.
He rushes down the avenue,
But stops when half the way,
And behind an ancient oak tree
He crouches,—and well he may;
There comes a sound terrific,
And volcanic, meteor flash,
And the grand old Berkeley mansion
Hath met its final crash.
The fragments, like vast rockets,
Rise to heaven and fall again,
And the fearful boom and its echoes
Shake the country, and rouse all men.
And then the gleam of madness
Shone fierce in the maiden's eye,
And she wildly danced by the flaming
That reddened the midnight sky:

"Oh do not press the Russian,
Or he burns his proudest town!
O do not goad a Samson,
Or he teareth the temple down!

"You have goaded the blinded Samson,
And the fleeing Russian pressed,
And song and legend forever
Their vengeance will attest."

They lead her away to the cottage,
She laughs and sings as she goes;
Her mania, alas! seems strengthened,
And all through the night it grows.
She does not rise in the morning,
A crimson fever burns;
She lies long weeks, and raveth,
But at last the illness turns;
And she lies there quiet and feeble,
And pale, her sweet eyes closed;
Long time she lay there silent,
But she wakened at length composed!
Round the strange room looked she wondering,
And then for her mother called,—
Ah, bitter at first the waking,
But madness was disenthralled!
Her Willie was her savior,
By his perilous wild design,
And his splendid hero's promptness,
When there was no time to refine.
The delusion all absorbing
That held her brain in throe
Was by th' explosion gratified,—
And then it had to go.

* * * *

This almost ends my story;—
About a year was passed
Ere Will and Allie wedded,
But it came about at last.
It happened at the capital
Where both their fathers dwell,

And hold again high office
Since black dominion fell.
Old Chloe waited on her,
And tottered in delight,
"She had decked old Miss at her wedding,
And why not Miss Allie to-night?"
As Willie's marriage present,
His father gave the Oaks,
Insurers had rebuilt it
Ere had cleared away its smokes.
And Allie in the church yard—
Sought ought the earliest day—
Cried much (not all in sorrow),
Upon her first survey.
A tall but broken column
Of frosted marble is there,
And carved her mother's name and this:
"How long, O Lord?" appear.
And in a gloomy dungeon,
Within the prison of State,
A familiar form was lying,
While the wedding guests were elate.
It was the carpet-bagger
Whom Allie would once have slain,
At last to justice accounting
For the larcenous crimes of his reign.
But very joyful Whitmire
When his eyes with the sun were unclosed,
For they brought him the Governor's pardon,
—But terms were there imposed:
"You're pardoned, *her* prayer hath saved you,
But this I must ordain,

That you go from the State where you glutted your
hate,
And never come back again."
And working on a railway,
In after years, a gang
Were seen of dusky convicts,
'Twas better far to hang!
(Alas! if ever torture
That passeth human speech,
Grinds soul and mind to brutishness,
And frame past cure of leech,
Was ever seen 'mong prisoners,—
E'en on the galley bench—
'Tis where the leasing system
Emits its putrid stench.
Ah! blot it out forever!
—Take not my single word,
But let the voice of Cable
And all the world be heard!
But I've seen to censure prisons
All through this mighty land,—
State, county, Northern, Southern,
In shameful plight they stand;
They're freezing in the winter,
In summer are Black Holes,
With vermin, filth, poor feeding,—
While jailor-brute controls.
More service get the clients
Whom I see in jail confined,
Than those on bail,—my pity
Rouses all my soul and mind.
We justly may imprison,
But not torture at the stake.

O shade of Howard warn us,
O politicians wake!
Grand-juries, ever shallow,
Presentments cease to file
Praising the jail's good order!
—Report the system vile!)[4a]
Among them those whose torches
Had fired the mansion last,
That night when Allie, dancing,
At last heard the terrible blast;
These too were given freedom,
Will's plea their pardon won,—
He owned that by their arson
Was Allie's cure begun.
And after a due conviction,
And a year or two of pain,
Knowing their evil counsels,
He saved them from the bane.
Then, too, it pleased his Allie,
Who, sane, is ever crossed
With pain, if any enemy
In revenge is put to cost.
She is ever kind and tender
To every thing that's frail,
Will weep if hound is bleeding,[5]
And e'er start at human wail.
And sometimes she composes
A verse or plaintive song,
Which always counsels pity
When the weak offend the strong.

Oh stop! think as above me
You stand to strike the blow,
That I've had few to love me,
And much to undergo.

For fortune never brightly
  Shone on my pathway lone,
No food by day, and nightly
  My head upon the stone!
And it was far more mournful
  Beneath the load to bend,
Because the world was scornful,
  And quick to reprehend.
O then, how can you wonder
  That I should bitter be,
That I should slay and plunder
  To 'scape from misery?
I will not say 'tis rightful
  To stain your hands with crime,
But poverty is frightful,
  Endurance is sublime!
And think if I have deeply
  My hands in sin imbued,
The world might once so cheaply
  Have saved what has ensued.
You'd own if you had sadly
  Been forced my life to live,
You must have done as badly;
  Then can you not forgive?
O I would mind it scarcely
  With even death to meet,
Since fate has served so fiercely,
  Yet spare me—life is sweet.

THE OLD DRIVER'S LAMENT.

I used to sound the mornin' horn to call the darkies up,
For to get their breakfasts, ere the daylight broke.
Because I was the driver then, and had an easy time,
For I made the others work and feel the stroke.
But now I'm old and has to work, my chilluns all are 'way,
And old Massa and his folks are dead, or poor;
I rings the white folks' church-bell, and I farms the quarter field,
And my freedom's brought me little good, I'm sure.

Of all the quarters in the land this was the biggest one,
But my lonely house is all that's left to stay;
The colored folks have gone to live within the new Free-Town,
And they've bought their huts and moved them far away.
The street and land on which the cabins once was 'rected thick
And the gardings, too, are now within the field,
And those dark, tall spots of cotton where the houses used to stand,
By these alone the past is now revealed.

The well has vanished, too, the pole and beam have rotted down,
And the hollow tree-curb long ago caved in;
I gets my water now from out the spring just in the woods,
For my young gran-chile can tote it far—and spin;
And her wheel-buzz whistles 'cross the field and makes a mournful noise,
For I used to hear a dozen at a time;

And there's now no guineas cacklin' loud, and nightfall
hears no more
Of calling up the hogs the mellow chime.

The ole mule gin and packin' screw you cannot see no more,
For they keeps a press and toll-gin in the town,
And the barn and stables too are gone, excep' the fodder crib,
And the fodder crib is fast a-tumblin' down.
The overseer's house is burnt and mine's a-gettin' ole,
And rickety and shaky, like myself,
For the chimbly bricks are loose on top, the mouldin' roof
it leaks,
And nearly down's the steps and water shelf.

CHORUS.

I dunno how to get along, I was not raised to this,
For slavin where I once had full command;
My ole woman's gone before me, and I soon will follow her,
For my head's a-whitening for the other land.

POOR BOSS.

Poor boss is lying low to-night,
He will not see the day;
I've hoped him out in many a fight,
But now he tells me, "Nay."

Poor boss is dying! O I ne'er
Believed 't would come to this,—
To die within the cabin here,
When the big house once was his.

Poor boss is lonely,—all are 'way,
Old Missis is no more;
Young Missy's teachin' off for pay,
Young Massa's in the store.

Poor boss! your birthday gift was me!
They raised me by your side;
And when I heard that I was free,
I said with you I'd bide.

And true I've been, poor boss, to you,
Though gone the rich old time;
And I hope we'll soon be joined anew
Within the heavenly clime.

THE CHARLESTON FAIRY.

I've seen and read of many a maid
Whose face and form were lovely, airy;
But all their beauties pale and fade
Before the Charleston King Street Fairy!
That olden city is the Troy
Or Saragossa of the nation,
But her women make her chiefest joy,
And give her widest reputation.

I love her breezy Battery,
With glorious relics seaward looming;
Each house with latticed balcony
And orange gardens around it blooming;
I love to hear the ancient bells
In mother's church, St. Michael's, chiming;
Most Charleston objects teem with spells,—
But her girls on King street set me rhyming.

Yet it is not so much their form,
Nor glory of their Southern beauty,
That thrills you like the wild alarm
Which sends the fire brigade to duty.
Their looks are rare, and make you stare,
But do not form their chief attraction;
It is the *soul* that's glowing there
That whirls your blood and pulse to action.

The Charleston maiden can surpass
In doing *three* things all existence:—
In raven locks and eyes the lass
Of Spain leaves others at a distance;
The English girl has azure eyes,
And blooming cheeks, and sunny tresses;
New York and Paris ladies prize
Their jewels, toilets, costly dresses.

Kentucky shows most splendid growth
And size in women, men and horses;
Virginian manners, ease—in both
The sexes—every one endorses;
The Nation's Daisy Miller's known
For fresh, frank freedom o'er the ocean;
The Creole fair ones stand alone
For willowy shape and languid motion;

The Boston girl has studied most,
In learning chief dependence places;
The Persians and Circassians boast
Their perfect female forms and faces;—
But none like Charleston's maid can *walk*,
Her *dancing* makes all rivals wary,
And earth has never heard such *talk*
As rattles from the King Street Fairy!

Like twinkling stars her tiny feet
E'er 'neath her, in and out are popping,
And scarcely touch that dear old street
In evening stroll or morning shopping.
Up, down it's length, without a rest,
Or round the bend, she'll spicy saunter,
With kerchief talk, bow, pause to test
Von Santen's cream, if it enchant her.

And when you see her in the glide,
Or any other kind of dancing,
There's nothing earthly you decide
So witching, utterly entrancing.
Old poets, watch those mice-like feet
Which peep and hide, of day-light scary!—
Your Julias are completely beat
And Easter suns by Charleston's Fairy!

And conversation's never heard
On all the globe like Charleston's ladies'.
—A form that sculptors worship's blurred,
Unless possessed of warmth the maid is!
Some girls are dolls;—though beauty's such
As from his Psyche to tempt Cupid,
They Quaker parties make—the Dutch
Are not themselves one half as stupid.

In Charleston women Nature pours
Just twice the life she grants to others,
So bubbling talk bursts out in stores
From girlhood till they're wives and mothers.
Each always takes you just aright,
Her soul divines your every feeling,—
Your mood attunes her converse bright
Or laugh, like silver bell outpealing.

In other places if a man
Indulges in a little smiling,
His wife or sweetheart takes the plan
Of looking grave, or loud reviling.
But Charleston girls will laugh at you,
And take your antics off to-morrow;
And, unreproved, you vow to do
No drinking that will bring them sorrow.

But out of all who promenade
This royal street of Charles's city,[6]
There is one rare and matchless maid
Whose charms excel all bounds of ditty.
Among that endless stream of fays,
Her glancing feet and rippling laughter
Impress you like the meteor's rays,
Which make the stars seem paler after.

Oh! music hushes at her voice,
But wakens to her waltzing, walking!
Your soul and being leap, rejoice,
To hear her bright, vivacious talking!
Oh! count me of the Roman Church,
Though of their doctrines once quite chary,
If on their altars they will perch
The image of this Charleston Mary!

I know not when she takes her sleep,—
E'er restless, e'er in animation;
And at her funeral none will weep,—
She'll never die, to give occasion!
She's angel now!—Oh, my device
To 'scape from death and regions Stygian,
Is: *Move at once to Paradise,*
And dwell in Charleston!—that's religion.

SOUTHERN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

A SATIRE.*

There was once, on the banks of a Western rivaire,
A man to be tried as a hog stealaire;
So he goes to an office and employs a lawyaire,
Who examines the case, and gives up in despaire.
For he said: "Sir, your guilt's so transparent and claire,
I can't help you, would cheat you to take a dollaire;
You had better, my friend, come out on the squaire,
Plead guilty, 'twill lighten your term by a yaire."
But the fellow was hopeful, and said: "My dear saire,
Just fire away, here's your retainaire.
In regard to your losing, I haven't a faire,
But if you should chance to, 'tis my own mattaire."
So the trial came on, and the crime did appaire
By the mouth of each witness who was put up to swaire.
And the lawyer, though reputed a great orataire,
Made the lamest defence that was ever heard thaire;
And the stern old judge, with a terrible glaire,
Charged the jury: "Find him guilty," as far as he daire.
So the jury went out, but in half an houaire,
They returned him, "Not Guilty," mid a general staire!

*Florence friends will from this at last discover the author of an anonymous and untraceable municipal election squib, circulated here five years ago, which created some commotion, and of which copies are yet preserved about town. Many unkindly temporary and personal hits are expunged, in consonance with the sound principles of art and criticism, and a few modifications and readjustments made in consequence. The author has been tempted to publish not a few other local squibs in the same (or different) metres, which he has perpetrated during life, but his literary conscience has not only forbidden, but impels him to request any parties holding copies, who may now at last suspect the origin, to consign them to oblivion.

And of all the spectators who heard with wondaire,
There was no one more astounded than that fellow's lawyaire!
So he called him aside when court rose for dinnaire,
And said: "There is something beneath this affaire
That I don't understand, and I hereby declaire
I'll return you the money if you'll explain the mattaire."
The fellow, as cool as a cucumbaire,
Said: "Old cock, it's a bargain, hand back my papaire;
Sir, the secret is this, *I stole the gruntaire,*
But divided the bacon with the twelve men faire!"

'Twas the same in New York where they started to raire
Concerning Boss Tweed and his plunderings thaire.
He locked up the records, and every vouchaire,
Through fire and burglar began to disappaire.
The people held meetings and every papaire
Was calling for justice; the election was naire,
So Tweed runs again, and scatters silvaire,
Knocks the head from a barrel in each barroom thaire,
Gags and bucks of every board the chief managaire
To place illegal voters on each poll registaire.
He saw he was placed in a tight cornaire
And just said to the rabble: "In my spoils you can shaire."
So he bought thirty thousand, and the ballot box thaire
Rolled him out a majority that made us all staire.

So you see that a verdict isn't always faire,
Nor elections won with money and with Bumgardnaire.
Yet the voice of the people rang loud and loudaire,
Till Tweed left the State House for the Toombs jailaire.
But they never would have caught him had he only dwelt haire,
In South Carolina—of some town the mastaire.

For the number of the people is by far smallaire,
And the problem's much simpler with the nigger votaire.
Tweed spent half a million in legal tendaire,
But the voters were white men and not the niggaire;
Had he here been some town boss a quart of liquaire
And a dollar a nigger would have fixed the mattaire.
And his triumph would have been such a signal affaire
He'd have treated the population to a big suppaire,
While his niggers, preceded by the boss managaire,
Made a torch light procession through the main thoroughfaire.
And as long as these niggers, led by their preachaire,
Dictated the nominations and the voting each yaire,
Boss Tweed would have reigned till Gabriel's toutaire
At last notified him his judgment was naire!

Some whites are disgusted, ask: "How shall we faire,
If money and whiskey are to rule us each yaire?
We'd submit were we whipped at the ballot box squaire,
But they whipped us at the till box and the liquor countaire,
And we see but one way to prevent it next yaire,
And that is to drop and count out the niggaire."
But these contests are frolics, only come once a yaire
To break the monotony, nothing's to seaire;
There's far more bribing at elections elsewhaire—
At the North and in England 'tis a business affaire.
To sit in the Commons to each candidate thaire
Costs five thousand sterling, as from books will appaire;
I first, too, felt angry, but now think it should chaire
That in town elections we consult the niggaire;
We have got him beside us forever to shaire
Our good luck or ill, let us make him bettaire.

He was not fit to vote or be officeholdaire,
When the Yankees enfranchised and made him mastaire;
So fantastic his tricks during his brief powaire
That the angels were saddened, shed many a taire.
But when Hayes had withdrawn every Union soldaire,
And the nigger was single, he trembled with faire;
The State was republican two score thousand claire,
Now the democrats carry it by that and ovaire;
They've laid aside shot gun and revolvaire,
And rely on arithmetic and tissue papaire.
These work quite effectual and save from the faire
Of rousing the Yankees with a dead niggaire,
So the blacks are reduced to a mere ciphaire
In general elections, and things are bettaire.
The State is improving, both white and niggaire
Are piling up money in a rapid mannaire;
The niggers own land and are treated quite squaire
As long as in politics they don't interfaire.
And I scarcely regret it,—a reign of terraire
Was the era just passed of the carpet baggaire.
While now to black freedom there's naught of dangaire,
And time and the free school will mend their charactaire.
They must creep ere they walk, and I discovaire
Many tokens of good for their hereaftaire.
As constables, bailiffs, police, they appaire,
Quite frequent already, placed by white men thaire.
To turn democratic is a certain levaire
For negroes to office of a kind minaire,
Though in Charleston (and one or two counties elsewhaire)
The democrats have chosen a black legislataire!
In matters municipal no parties appaire,
And the nigger's allowed a considerable shaire.

So though I'm revolted at the shameless mannaire
He offers his vote for the mighty dollaire,
Yet it will be training to both the niggaire
In voting, and white men to vote with him faire;
There both sides bribe niggers, and give them liquaire,
Split their vote, rely on them, and counting is squaire.

If the nigger will hear me he'll no longer chaire
For "de Party," but drop it like a coal of fiaire;
Let him turn democratic, that party will taire
In fragments the moment there's no fight to faire;
Every runner for office will court the niggaire,
Protect all his rights—and the pie with him shaire.

1879.

A SERENADE.

'Tis a lovely Southern midnight,
In the glowing summer time;
He stands in the beautiful garden,
Where the vines to her window climb.

No clouds, nor mist, and the heavens
Are a blue ground, studded with gold,
And the silvery beams of the moonlight
Streak the tree-shades downward rolled.

The scent of the rich magnolia
Is abroad on the cool, moist air,
And the dark green hedges and foliage
Seem sculpturing, massy and rare.

And the soft, sweet strains of his music
Rouse her up, as she dreamily sleeps,
She lifteth her head for a moment,
And then to the window she creeps;

And when, for an instant, he pauses,
A rustling is heard from above,—
And he hastily picks up the flowers,
And kisses his hand to his love!

TWO FATES.

Her form was as delicate, melting,—
With beauty, deep, glowing and rich,—
As the statues in echoing galleries,
Each gracefully set in its niche.

Her complexion was white as the marble,
Her features so mobile with thought
That passion shone on them like lightning,
Once seen she was never forgot.

She would pensively bend o'er the needle,
Or do other service as light;
Or wait at her young mistress' toilet,
And sleep on her floor in the night.

With the swarthy ones round her she mingled,
With the scorn of a militant race,
Yet you saw her move round the old mansion,
With sadness impressed on her face.

For oft from her mistress in passion,
"You forget whom you are!" came the cry,
And the red-blood would mount to her forehead,
And the hot tear would start in her eye,

From beneath the magnificent lashes
That shaded the fiery beam,—
Then her face in her hands she would bury,
While passion burst forth in a stream.

For oh! this most delicate maiden,
With the tresses that fall to the ground,
Is a slave! and the slightest of taints in the blood
Is a curse that can ne'er be effaced.

—It is whispered that from the plantation
The trader once bore far away
A quadroon slave mother forever,
Though she prayed with her child to stay.

But this child by that mistress was pitied,
Whose hate sent the mother to roam,
She was kept as the young lady's playmate,
And to tend on the beautiful home.

And these maidens, the playmate and mistress,
Have the tale ever kept from their reach
That the mansion's imperious owner
Could well be styled father by each;

So the one as her parent may hail him,
And be honored and worshipped of all,
While the other must call him her Master,
And ever live under the thrall.

For the blood in her veins is too ardent
To leave her content with her lot,
Like the herd she is classed with,—she mourneth,
But she cannot unravel the knot!

Other Poems.

A PLEA FOR JIM.*

Almost always it is bitter to stand upon the brink
Of the deep and icy waters, we shudder and we shrink;
But sometimes one can truly ask, "Where is the sting of death,
And where the victory of the grave?" as he yields his mortal breath.

Despite the shock and agony, we think it sweet and grand
To die upon the battle field, to save our native land;
And the thought is very soothing that death will o'er us creep,
As we lie at home on the sick bed, like a soft and gentle sleep;

With our head upon the pillow, on which so oft before
We've met with rest and pleasing dreams, or thought each purpose o'er,—
With our weeping friends around us to bid the last farewell,
And some gentle hand upon our brow to soothe the pains that swell.

[*These lines were composed at Darlington Court House, S. C., in October, 1879, during the rather restless night passed by the author before argument in case of the *The State* vs. *James Campbell*, a colored man, on trial for murder, and were actually repeated at the conclusion of the author's speech in defense next day, before Judge J. B. Kershaw and the jury,—though, it is needless to say, without announcing their source. Jim (being acquitted in spite of the verses) has since named a child after me, and I return the compliment by appending his name to my lines, which until herein printed stood "A Plea to the Jury," in MS. I will add that since 1877, executions have been private in S. C.,—lest the verses mislead.]

With the dear old doctor by our side, who has saved us in the past
A hundred times and tries to now, but's powerless at last,
And to know we'll then be laid beside the loved ones who repose
Beneath the willow, and the grass, that in the church yard grows.

But the convict has no mourning friends to cheer him as he dies,
But the brutal crowd swarm round him, to gape and strain their eyes;
Beneath him are no easing folds on which to pass away,
But the gallows and the tightening rope bear up their strangling prey.

He has no hand to soothe him, all men are there to see
That pitilessly is carried out the bloody law's decree;
The troops among whose glittering ranks to fall it were such fame
Are in array to see that he shall die a death of shame.

E'en the doctors, e'er at other times intent to save and cure,
Are there to see he's not cut down until the work is sure;
Till his pulse is still and quiet, and the life has ebbed away;
When careless hands his body seize, and in the coffin lay,

With his eyes blood-shot, protruding, and the foam upon his lip,
And then in a mean, dishonored grave the corpse they quickly slip;

While his spirit, rudely torn away, of that region goes in quest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

LOVE AND ESTRANGEMENT.

A MEDITATIVE ROMANCE.

Ah! there is naught can match the bliss
Which every ardent lover feels
When she to whom he pleads and kneels
Allows him the warm betrothal kiss.

And oh! I ask the bards who paint
The torments of the damned below,
To say if there be deeper woe
Than loss of her for whom we faint?

'Tis kinship of the soul makes love;
Some natures jar, seem ne'er in tune,
While others, like the sun to noon
Seem fitted, e'er together move.

Because we've need for sympathy,
Appreciation, tender, true,
For some to trust, confide in, who
Will feel with us, and laugh or cry.

So all love's sweet—in mother kind,
In father, brother, sister, friend;
And torturing pangs the spirit rend
If these are to its longings blind.

But—such of sex the natural charm—
When we repose on woman's breast,
When heart to throbbing heart is pressed,
Flows sympathy most full and warm.

Because as boyhood into youth,
Like dawn into the morning, opes,
Our taste is palled by wonted hopes,
By scenes and things that used to soothe.

There comes a sense of unknown need,
We muse and pine, we know not why,
And aimless live, till by and by
We suddenly awake, take heed:

The soul has found it loves, at last!
A thrilling form within the view
Has risen; blindly we pursue,
Stake weal or woe, upon the cast.

And for each one there's some bright soul,—
Who'd suit no other, made for him;—
Who seen will make his vision swim,
And gained will make his nature whole.

For there's a magnet force in love;
A hundred girls may fail to draw
A man to them, though not a flaw
Is in them, fair as those above.

But let him see the one that fate
Designed for him, and he will start,
Quick to his throat will leap his heart,
And he must die or with her mate.

So if we hold a needle near
A hundred stones or iron bolts,
No force within them draws or jolts,
To them it never will adhere.

But hold it near the magnet bar,
Or lode-stone true, and it will spring
To either one, and to it cling,
Though you may roughly shake or jar.

Yet I may err: to Boswell said
Gruff Johnson, dear to English heart,[8]
"The sexes have no counterpart;
A man could fifty thousand wed,

And each would suit him just as well
As any other; for 't were best
Your wife to choose by cool behest
Of judge, and not by passion's spell."

Still, passion's strong! I lived apart
From men, my soul intent on fame,
Long years, resolved to win the game,
Though everything should try to thwart;

No man, or great, or small, no king
Could make me, cringing, yield to him,
And yet I've kneeled while all grew dim
Before this slight and delicate thing.

I'd read of Maggie Tulliver,
Of Beulah, Myrrha," and I'd long
To find some girl amidst the throng
Like them, so I could worship her.

Yes, often, often, I had sighed
To find one who could feel with me--
Had sometimes thought, "At last 't is she,
I've found my own true love, my bride."

But something told me each time ere
I spoke, "She's not for thee,"—it passed!
But well I knew my love at last,
When full I came within *your* sphere!

At this, I know, the world would laugh,
Men look on marriage business-wise,
Think "true love," "kindred souls," and sighs
Are talk made of the veriest chaff.

But I would die without you; none
Save you would suit me; we are kin,
Of soul, made each for each; I'd win
The world itself if you were won!

And strange! o'er books she does not pore,
She loves not many things I love,
But, like a voice heard from above,
She thrills me, so I must adore.

Ah! she is joyous, young and warm,
But just sixteen, and life and light,
As if she were some vision bright,
Breathe from her slender, chiseled form.

O give me the girl of sweet sixteen!
  Ere time her ardor has assuaged,
  Before she has grown formal, aged,—
Crisp, fresh, each impulse swift and keen.

For I detest the maiden cold,
  The one whom proper notions rule,—
  Who most of all's in loving cool,
Shrinks from a kiss, thinks candor bold.

I love the girl who worships me!
  Who, should I warmly kiss and press,
  Will tremble, blush,—but acquiesce;
For love should not one-sided be.

I love the girl who when my step
  Is heard, will start with reddening cheek,
  Who eager lists whene'er I speak,
For love that's hidden 's shallow, cheap.

For what is life unless we feel?
  Ah! throw stiff custom to the dogs,
  Throw off each formal way that clogs
The soul, and quenches ardent zeal!

Give me the man who speaks aloud,
  Whose face betrays what passion moves,
  Who whole-souled works, or hates, or loves,
Who never is by habit cowed.

For so 't should be! I love extremes;
  If one's e'er ardent for the wrong,
  He'll some day for the right be strong;
He's weak who always moderate seems.

For rhythm and reaction rule
  In nature's works, not compromise,[10]
  And he'll in old age be most wise
Whose youthful passions least are cool.

For none can reason, save they're stirred,
  And first were warmed to search, explore;
  And should we strive to teach before
We've felt, our reasoning's weak and blurred.

And thus it happens that a time
  Of trusting, bigotry, precedes
  The doubt for, tolerance of all creeds;
If deep the last, the first 's sublime.

Yes, strange though 't is, fanatics are
  Cosmopolites and liberals
  Just in the bud,—the arsenals
To gather future, needed ware.

And hero worship, oft cried down,
  Is after all the core, the germ,
  Whence science springs, which we affirm,
With justice, gives our age renown.

O most of men will plod along,
  Contented with their dull, poor lot,
  And caring not one single jot
For all the themes of science, song!

So when we see an earnest girl,
  Or boy who dreams and worships e'er,
  O give them hope! O give them cheer!
They are of precious price a pearl!

The crowd's so dull and stupefied
By earthly ways, that if a man
Were placed within perfection's van,
To mark a change we long should bide.

But take some girls of Maggie's stamp,
Some boy Macaulays,[10a] Bacons, Watts,
And give to them congenial lots—
They'd grow as if released from cramp.

And O! the agonies that fall
On genius born amidst the herd!
O far, O far to be preferred
Of fabled hells the burning thrall!

No wonder men of mighty mind
And spirit, lacking sympathy,
Burst, Byron-like, in awful cry
That starts the world, relief to find.

Nor that Mokannas, Bonapartes,
And Cæsars, maddened, frenzied, starved,
Unsympathized with, fierce, have carved
Their fame with sword, to move men's hearts.

The conqueror's guilt, the antics queer
Of him who sang of Auburn's fate,
The brooding Manfred's ruthless hate,
The same source have,—the need of cheer.

Yet ah! 'tis never possible
To read all thoughts of those we love;
For like the hand within the glove,
The spirit's hidden in its cell.

"Spirit?" I spoke the common way!
I would, I would we were not blind
And knew the truth; but ah! the mind
May not the inner self survey.

It cannot look within itself,
Still less can look beneath the face
Of other men; it leaves no trace
When death has wrought—like vanished elf.

We live; and then—sink back to earth?
Or rise? Ah, 'tis the law of laws
To know effects, but never cause!
O mournful dearth! O mournful dearth!

—And can it really be my doom
To lose the one was made for me?
Then why did God e'er let me be,
Or hold me from the welcome tomb?

'Twas jealousy upon my part,
On hers 'twas will and wounded pride.
I left my youthful promised bride
So bitter grew the ache of heart.

I boasted that I did not care,
Alas! I knew not what I spoke,
The spell was strong, could not be broke.
And it will haunt me now fore'er.

I care not now to mix with men,
My absent looks are noticed there;
Nor do I meet with better cheer,
When all alone with book or pen.

When sometimes forced among the crowd,
I see them marvel at my mirth,
So loud and fierce—unnatural birth,
As hollow vessels ring most loud.

While those who cross me and oppose
Start back before my deadly glance;
Yet see it is not arrogance,
But moody recklessness that shows.

An aching void is in my life,
I have no one to feel with me;
I loathe all things I hear or see,
They fail to soothe my spirit's strife.

I long to meet a loved one's look,
To clasp her warmly to my breast,
And feel her beating heart attest
Her love for me has stood the shock.

It may be that I did her wrong,—
I acted blind; she told me, "Go!"
But scorn, not guilt, she showed, and O!
Without a word we parted long.

Ah! who can say that beauty's naught,
That ill can dwell in lovely fane?[11]
By feelings, thoughts we entertain,
Are features and expression wrought.

And is she not a lovely girl?
Gaze on her face and glorious form,
You feel the blood roll quick and warm,
And judgment rushes into whirl!

The face an artist loves to see,
O'er which the soul is playing e'er,
Which quickly shows she is aware
Of all that stirs you, grief or glee.

The willowy form in Southlands made,
So "airy, fairy," in its grace;
No stiff lines, angles, to deface,
Soft, rounded, melting, every shade.

And dreamy eyes, blue as the sea,
Where gentlest thoughts are pictured e'er,
That glorious wealth of golden hair,—
Ah! daisies are not sweet as she.

They tell me that she languishes
As if she might be all undone,
Like morning flower beneath the sun,
So sad is she, and spiritless.

O who can tell why does she so?
O can it be that she is torn
By the same grief that me has worn?
Then why should last our bitter woe?

* * * * *

The slightest thing can change a life,
No cruelty could last in her,
And when my life was nigh a blur,
We chanced to meet; paused awkward; rife,

We flushed. I knelt, said, "Love me, please;
I love you, in you move and live;
O! can we not forget, forgive
The things that part us, mar our peace?"

And oh! I feel the rapture now!
Her curls were on my breast again!
The storm-cloud passed from o'er me then,
The heavens shone out, grief ceased to bow!

REFORMATION.

O! if Christ, as man, to mortals
As of old appeared again,
We should see the Church's portals
Closed to him again, as then.
For against what men think normal
He would, as before, inveigh,
Pharisaic, heartless, formal
Yet is man in thought and way.
So we'd see both laymen, preachers
Rise against His doctrines strange,
Call him one of those false teachers
Who around for victims range.
And about the Second Advent
(If in humble guise He come)
'Twill be writ: "The people mad went,
He again met martyrdom!"
For we ne'er are rendered better
By some sudden change of creed;
We may loud profess the letter—
The old spirit rules the deed.

And mankind acts not to others
As he'd have them act in turn,
But each one against his brothers
Seems with jealousy to burn.
In the struggle for a living
Or for honors others seek,
All are taking blows and giving,
And the strong crush down the weak.
"Times were bad, but skies are brightening,"
Thus we boast as we progress,
But I doubt if steam and lightning
Have increased our happiness.
More men now to live are able
Than could live in olden time;
But these still are miserable,
Toiling hard in dirt and slime.[12]
While some dwell in stately houses
Millions into hovels crowd,
Where one man eats, drinks, carouses,
Ten are slaving, hunger cowed.
Management succeeds to fervor
In reforms; a livelihood
Seeks the preacher now, subserver
Of the fashion, not of good.
And I sometimes think that Jesus
Taught a creed we can't obey;
Till our passions, ills release us
We must on each other prey.
For if love of life continue,
And the love of woman last,
Earth must swarm, and straining sinew
Nor machine can save from fast.

And while hunger man oppresses
Every one will work for self,
Seeking first to live, successes
Craze him, grows the love of pelf.
Then there follows lust of power;
And the strongest make advance,
Till the millions helpless cower
Underneath a tyrant's glance.
Nor do individuals solely
Strive their fellow men to blight,
Well if this described it wholly!
But we band and nations fight.
Knowledge waxes, but to blind men
Matters it though glows the lamp
On their path? and still we find men
Warring, Europe all a camp.
Then the race is custom ridden,
Each one thinks his set the world,
And—all heresy forbidden—
Slowly is new thought unfurled.
Tickle, flatter,—reputation
Is upon the instant won!
But the path of Reformation,
If your quest be glory, shun!
He who tries may gain a hearing
Late when pleasure's gone from life;
Or, when dead, receive the cheering
Which he needed in the strife.
Yes, 't is evil prematurely
For a youth to dare to think;
Though he reasons strongly, surely,
Men will laugh, and pass the wink.

Silly comrades he surpasses
Ridicule and persecute;
Patronage from age, alas! is
Sympathy's poor substitute.
For the old man laughs: "a dreamer,
But in time he will amend;
I, too, was in youth a schemer,
But experience did unbend."
Ah! aged men act harshly, wrongly,
Thus to smile at youthful hope;
We might cure all ills, if strongly
Each with his fair share would cope.
But when old men bear so tamely
What when young they hated, loathed,
Can we marvel if yet lamely
Moves Reform, pinched, starved, unclothed?
Ah, yes! men and nations often,
Like the Church, reject their Christ;
Hard his task who tries to soften
Hearts by custom hardened, iced.
And methinks when on the pages
Of the past I read the tale
Of the conflicts genius wages,
This could be its owner's wail:
"Cast me out, revile and censure,
Cut me keenly, to the quick,
If I e'er to serve you venture
Insults follow fast and thick.
Yet I thought if learning, merit
Won respect, I'd not be stung,
But the old curse I inherit,—
'Tis atrocious to be young,[13]

But if youth had long since vanished,
Could I hope for better cheer?
No! for men have ever banished
Genius from its native sphere.
Envy!—truly spake the gentle
Jesus, 'Honors end at home!'
Talents ne'er are instrumental
In the life race, save you roam.
Ridicule me, say my speeches
Are a nuisance, out of place;
I submit, your act but teaches
Worth at first is but disgrace.
Drive me off—just Aristides,
Ostracised, survived the blow;
Disraeli had to bide his
Time when hissed at starting so;
So Demosthenes was hooted
At the outset; 'in their pride
Perish sleepless souls,' naught booted
By their genius, lofty, wide.
Of all men the wisest, brightest,
Dying left his fame sublime,
Which at home was held the lightest,
Unto aliens, future time.[14]
Yes, you spurn me, I am willing!
Yet I swear some future day—
Should naught keep me from fulfilling
All the tasks I would essay,—
That I'll make you rue it deeply,
Deeply rue the evil hour,
When you chose to rate so cheaply
One on whom Fame's gifts will shower.

Yes, I swear it deeply, sternly,
Men shall judge 'twixt you and me;
Ere my ashes in the urn lie
You your cruel fault shall see!
If I win in life's great battle,
You may yet be pointed out
As dumb, envious, driven cattle,[15]
And the world will at you scout;
Saying: 'See the Lilliputians,
And the Gulliver they bound!'
—O your fault needs absolutions
Numberless, past speech profound!''

Written a year or two after leaving College.

THE WORLD'S FAIR.

1876.

I saw the throngs, of them I was a part;
I moved a stranger midst the swelling tides,
Lonelier than had I been where wonted glides
My still existence, far from crowded mart.
I saw the trophies there displayed of art,
And gloried as I thought what vast advance
Those treasures showed since first mankind made start
In progress, crushed by want and ignorance.
But there were things which saddened all my joy:
I saw the monster gun at Essen[16] cast,
And thought: "Peace reigns a while, its arts employ
The race; soon war spreads ruin, dreadful, vast,
Ah! why say things of old were all amiss
And progress boast, then weapons show like this?''

PHILADELPHIA, *August, 1876.*

SHE NEVER SMILES.

I gazed upon her in the skating rink,
Where crowds, on rollers, glided round the hall;
She sat alone, and though she did not shrink
From public gaze, she leaned against the wall,
And seemed of far off things to dream and think.
E'er now and then there came a slip, a fall,
And all would laugh in hearty, sportsome style,
But she looked pensive on, and did not smile.

I met her in her uncle's parlors, where
All things were redolent of wealth and taste,
Some evenings crowds would go to parties there,
Some evenings she by me alone was faced.
She was not dull, and fully would she bear
Her part in converse. Some with wit were graced,
And we were jesting, laughing all the while;
She heard, commented, but would never smile.

I met her at the dance, where music swelled,
Where light and beauty shone upon the scene,
Where all the soul and all existence welled
Into the limbs, and felt for motion keen.
She joined the mazes; could aught have dispelled
The cares of mind and made one feel serene
'Twas this voluptuous whirl, which ran us wild
With joy;—but though she waltzed, she never smiled.

She was not shy nor unsophisticated;
  She came of those who trace their lineage back;
Her education could not low be rated,
  Her manners richest culture did not lack;
Society's best life she knew till sated,
  In town and country travels was not slack;
She was agreeable, talked well, was sought;
But she was never known to smile at aught.

Ah! she had grace and deepest loveliness;
  She seemed to me some grief-wrecked, fair Lucile,
Or convent-sister who relieves distress.
  But sorrow ne'er had acted to congeal—
Few beings could a gentler past possess;
  While present, future, teemed with only weal.
'Twas Nature's bent, Madonna's holy style
Was her's, so lovely, pure, devoid of smile;

And sculptors would delight to model her,
  Or artists to portray her on one knee,
With hands upraised and clasped, her soul astir,
  Her face to heaven upturned, in meekest plea.
Oh! she would make a Virgin clear of blur,
  An ideal Mary for us all to see;
So holy, calm, so guiltless of all guile,
So infinitely yearning, free of smile.

ENVIRONMENT.

Oh Chatterton, O Shelley! I have oft
  Wept o'er your sad tales with true sympathy;
The world laughs at emotion, calls it soft,
  But fellow feeling cures austerity.

For never yet did mortal sin or err,
Laugh, groan;—when others called it foolish, wrong,
But things within his life, and character,
Unseen to others, hurried him along.

There never yet was upright juror, judge,
Trying some lowly prisoner for crime,
But would have sinned the same, if, born to drudge,
He, too, had slaved for bread in dirt and slime.

O! easy is it for the man of means,
Lolling his life away 'mid comforts, joys,
To thank God what a distance intervenes
Between himself and those that crime employs.

Why should he err? his wishes gratified,
In ease reclined, he feels no care nor want,
But let him take the poor man's place he'd chide,
Fast, shiver, toil, would he be complaisant?

We are all circumstance's creatures! each
Would act alike if breeding, ills concurred.
O let us think ere homilies we preach
"Had we been placed the same, then we had erred."

O Tolerance! thou brightest gem of time,
The last and best sensation man evolves,
How long before to hate one 'twill be crime,
Who different from yourself life's problems solves?

Yes, destitution, bodily desire
Would make the purest, gentlest angel sin;
But men have not perceived that just as dire
To some men are the hungerings within.

Oh, I have passed my days a lonely man,
I've lived among, not of the crowd around,
No drop to drink, though everywhere I scan,
Unmeasured oceans, boundless seas are found.

And you have laughed at me and patronized,
Considered me a harmless, dreaming boy,
A theorist, a student, signalized
By fear of men, distaste for pleasure, coy!

So coy in fact that naught could tempt his talk,
Could draw his presence, make him seem at home
With other men; firm ever as the rock
To shun the world, he bends o'er ponderous tome.

Oh! you have never dreamed he dared to think—
Think for himself, and you to criticise;
Oh, could you see, you'd start from him, and shrink—
The depth of storm that 'neath the calmness lies.

I've longed to throw the gage down, tell the men
Who've loudly to my face spoke out their thought,
Not dreaming I could think, had mine own ken,
That I, too, thought, and—not all things they taught.

In Carolinians flows the Hotspur blood,
Their State's the Harry Percy of the States;
Brave, generous, rash, there's nothing understood
Of half way measures in their loves and hates.

Oh! I have known your spirit far too well;
Your fiery blood within mine own veins burns,
My quiet life, reserve, hath been a hell,
From discipline e'er soul impulsive turns.

But why, like Arnold, leap upon the spears?
When there are none to help, to follow one.
Unlike to Curtius, maddened one appears
Who plunges in the gulf with reason none.

If one loves truly, yearns to help some cause,
He proves how deep his love not by a wild,
Impetuous effort, but by making pause
Till tells his sure blow, meanwhile though reviled.

And I have loved the truth, have spent my life
In quest of truth, and I will show my love
Not by the rush called for by feelings rife,
But by such halt as reason will approve.

1875-6.

"FIRST PRINCIPLES."

I once was friendly with an eremite,
A pale, sad, stern, abstracted college youth,
Who shunned all men,—till children at his sight
In passing ceased their play, looked awed, uncouth,—
Whose midnight lamp in his lone search for truth
Gleamed steady from the casement blinds aloft.
We thought him quite eccentric, and forsooth,
Although in life I've seen strange beings oft,
His equal never. But we never at him scoffed.

For he was posted in our studies all,
In conning pages from the classic lore,
In theorem and science, all we call
Good letters in the modern writers' store.
But I discovered that he pondered o'er,
The most, religion and philosophy,
And day by day he talked, confided more;
And College done some years, he made such cry
Of woe, as I've ne'er heard. To cite it I will try:

"Alas! what use is it to hold aloof
From what is wrong, to languish and to pine
For better things? Nay would it be behoof
If we past doubt could ascertain, define
What things would be perfection? —every sign
And proof we gain by conning Nature's laws
Shows, ah too surely! that the whole design
Of Nature never will permit a pause
In the stern cause of evil; ever will be flaws.

"Oh, I have pored, for many a weary hour,
O'er treatises whose object 't was to show
Some consolation for the ills that shower
Upon the world. They say that long ago
The world was worse than now, men had more woe;
That the hereafter shall still better be
And future men still happier; it is slow,
Improvement's march; but, as they all agree,
Is sure; the distant future will perfection see.

"What mockery's here!—'tis said when death's dark doom
Against the Orient prisoner is decreed,
If one agrees to suffer in his room,
The law is satisfied, the felon's freed;
Thus often guiltless men for guilty bleed.

Oh, this is well for those who live, survive,
Whom friends—Alcestis-like—will supersede,
Or who get deputies by donative,
But would we be the other who must cease to live!

"And does it comfort us, if we reflect
That future men will have contentment, joy,
While we are wretched, suffering, deject?
Thoughts of supposed Milleniums oft employ
The minds of men, but can they give alloy
To present sorrow, if to think we halt?
Ah, no! this question will our pleasure cloy;
'What good to us, when rotting in the vault,
The golden times which will the coming race exalt!'

"And after all, what is this progress worth?
Suppose that we could ride ten times as fast,
Send thought to distance quick as it has birth,
Cure ails, live better, healthier, than in past,
Let countless goods material be amassed;
Yet still *would we be happy?* there's the test
By which alone all eras must be classed;
And had we reached what will be progress' best
We still should be unhappy, languish, have unrest.

"For will we ever know what follows death,
If we are forms that matter chanced to take?
If thought is motion, and when stops our breath
Then ceases life, we sleep ne'er more to wake?
Or have we soul within us, which will shake
The gross clay from it, when earth's life is quenched,
And glad, or slow, this world to e'er forsake
Search distant regions where joys will retrench
All earthly ills—or where 't will be in torments drenched?

"But vain the question, all important, though;
For consciousness our grasp will e'er elude.
There's something back of what we think and do,
We trace its workings some; none has pursued
The search till ended, and the origin viewed.
And till we pierce the secret, happiness
Will still eschew us as 't has e'er eschewed.
But there are other things which would depress
If e'er to farthest human limits we progress.

"For we've e'er pined to know what underlies
The universe, what caused, supports all things.
Force, it may be, in space and time gives rise
To what things do and seem, what to them clings
But this relieves not all the falterings
Which we've e'er felt when we contemplated
That finalest of problems—for whence springs
What we call force, what is it? None has read
That secret, nor what's flitting time? or space o'erspread?

"Let sages think and search, their triumphs are
But tracing back effects to causes lower,
And underlying all things we're aware
Of something which defies thought's utmost power,
Unknowable. Though knowledge would devour
All things whatever, yet there's not one fact
Or thing, though simple, which we can explore
In substance, birth. And we shall e'er be racked
With bitterest anguish while these things remain untracked.

"But not alone would yearnings of the soul
Impair our happiness, but there'd remain
Material ills—'spite progress—dealing dole.
The fight for life will ever us enchain,
Will ever bring its fearful share of pain.

Suppose reclaimed, stocked full with men the earth,
These men well cherished under science' reign:
Yet, passion's ruthless, there would be new birth,
The strong will rear their offspring, though the weak get dearth.

"In time the human race must supersede
All other forms of life, and then will come
A contest mid its members, and the meed
Will fall upon the strongest; for the doom
Of those not fit and strong is death and gloom.
Ah! sad it is, but happiness is based
On misery, because to make it bloom
Intense on some, most others deep must taste
Of woe, must lose their weal which on the few is placed.

"What good is science?—for machines to save
Labor severe, though they enable more
Of mortal men to live, yet all must slave
Hard as before; for now as heretofore
The law Malthusian, hard though we deplore,
Must hold its course. The lifeless instrument
When first invented much will swell our store
Of time and means; yet, e'er improvident,
Offspring increase, till all we gained on them is spent.

"But what if Progress was as perfect here
As it could be when reached earth's utmost bounds?
How long would it continue? Ah, 't is clear
That here, as ever, mournful answer sounds!
For all the spheres upon their orbits' rounds,
Our own and all, existence all, must be
Resolved at last to mist! Ah this confounds
The very hopefullest,—that destiny
Of earthly progress simply's nebulosity.

"For th' universe, with all its various life,
Grew from a measureless and mattery cloud,
And when the time comes, when shall end the strife
Of evolution, mist will be our shroud,
And then with the same properties endowed
This mattery cloud will cool to worlds again,
And these turn cloud once more! oh, crushed and bowed
Beneath remorseless laws, we here remain,
Unhappy, longing, helpless, moaning in our pain.

"What boots it, then, to fret beneath our lot,
To hunt for ills and pine about their cure?
Are we not here part of a plan and plot?
From kicking 'gainst the goad can good enure?
Each thing of life is born, becomes mature,
Produces offspring, languishes and dies:
The chiefest pleasures, then, the only sure,
Are eating, drinking, loving, resting! wise
The man who revels here, drops aspirations, sighs.

"Yes, after all there is no happiness
Which equals that which from these sources flows.
Oh, to be happy we must acquiesce
In what experience, what reason, shows
To be inevitable; who but knows
We are put here, each in peculiar place,[17]
To draw nutrition, propagate till mows
The scythe of death, when, lying 'neath the grass,
We'll rot and into other forms of matter pass!

"Oh, I've done wrong to rail upon mankind!
They seize the pleasures of the present hour,
They neither look ahead, or look behind,
Think not on evils that above them tower;

They seek each other; when within their power
They rest from labor, slumber, feast and drink,
Seek beauty's arms within the nuptial bower.
And they do right! why should I weep and think
Of what the world should be, and from my fellows shrink?''

LACK OF STAMPS.

[Dedicated to a young gentleman friend who had been engaged for four years.]

I clasp you to my heart, my love,
And sip the nectar from your lip,
And feel as if I were above,
While fleet the moments onward slip.

And warmly you return the press
And kiss me back again, my love,
But short these gleams of blissfulness,
Dark clouds their shadows forward shove.

For though you're in my arms, my love,
Though daily I am at your side,
'Tis fated by the powers above
That you may never be my bride.

For there, alas! is many a bar
Can sever nearest hearts, my love;
—We could not touch, though near, the star,
If cased our hand in iron glove.

O! all the tears we shed, my love,
Are due not to the wealthy swain,
Who warmly strives to win his dove,
But finds he is not loved again.

For wed her—if she willed—he could,
And he may find another dove;
But wed *we* may not, though we would,
Nor could I wed another love.

Ah! what's this cruel bar, my love,
That parts us and our being cramps—
What is this dark decree above?
'Tis merely,—well, the lack of stamps!

AN INSCRIPTION.

[Written on the fly leaf of a young lady's autograph album.]

Ask a girl for her fist and she will not resist,
But writes it quite child-like and bland;
But all are aware 'tis a different affair,
If you ask for the gift of her hand.

Now if it shall hap that any young chap
In this Album e'er finds such a fist,
As to wish and demand and be yielded the hand,
My object shall not have been missed!

AN EXCUSE.

[Written in shorthand in the album of a young lady in Charleston.]

You asked me to write, but such was my plight
That though I searched volumes of song,
I found not a line, which I'd like to assign
To a place in your Album's choice throng.

And I even did worse, when I turned from the verse
Of others, and tried my own hand;—
So spare me abuse, if I write this excuse
Instead of some sentiment grand!

MAJOR SPREAD.

A BURLESQUE ON AN ACTUAL INCIDENT.

[Read from the Reading Box of Euphradian Society, at College, when the author was just seventeen. Given uncorrected.]

From ancient Greece a host of heroes sprang
Far famed in rapine, deeds of blood and spleen;
And of their actions Father Homer sang,
Outdoing every author that we've seen.

But of their battles we have heard enough!
A modern is the subject of my song.
Inspire me, Muse, and though the ways are rough
To thy bright temple, let me not go wrong.

I sing the actions of fierce Major Spread,
A hero and a Carolinian true,
Who by the fair ones and good whiskey led,
Committed blunders which I'll tell to you.

For Major Spread a ladies' man was he,
And he would dance and flirt and kill his time,
And go to parties and get on a spree,
Or to his sweetheart write a verse in rhyme.

The Major was a handsome man in truth,
His features fine, and of the Roman cast;
Moustaches long, and waxed like jolly youth,
While limbs and cheeks were of proportions vast.

Once was a party on a star-lit night,
To which the Major with some friends had gone,
And where a fair one, to his great delight,
Had asked a favor of our gallant Don.

For then the tyrant, fashion, had ordained
That every lady should a framework get
Of copper wire bent and interchained,
Just like a basket, and with moss o'erset.

And this—a hanging basket called by name—
Was what the lady wished to make just then;
She had the framework, and to him she came
To ask for moss, out of some swamp or fen.

Next day equipped with basket, axe and saw,
Into the woods he sped his hasty way,
He wished to go to Cedar Creek, and draw
From off some moss grown tree the clusters grey.

Far in the inmost recess of the swamp
He penetrates, and seeks the slippery bank
Of Cedar Creek, on which he took a romp,
And from its waters clear and deep he drank,

As also of some waters stronger far
Which he had loaded in a pocket flask,
Not quite enough to stir his perpendicular,
But too much for his safety on such task.

And being then refreshed and rested well,
He hies him to his work of love and trust,
And climbs aloft into a tree, they tell,
With branches o'er the water's surface thrust.

And taking now the saw into his hands,
A moss hung branch which o'er the water frowned
He picks him out, and quick on it he stands,
Upright and steady as if on the ground.

And then our Major, leaning o'er the limb,
Between himself and trunk began to saw,
From love and nectar was his sight so dim
That from his peril he did not withdraw.

With the utmost haste was the limb sawed through,
And, giving away with a horrible crash,
Down it and the Major to the water flew,
And tumbled in with a deafening splash!

And now he yells and cries and roars aloud,
He screams with fright and wallows in the mud,
The water gurgles, and, with grandeur proud,
Enveloping, sinks him under the flood.

But Major Spread, he quickly rose again;—
A gas-bag cannot under water stay;
But one of his boots, it was a number ten,
It left his foot and swiftly sailed away.

The tenants of the water, rudely roused,
Came swimming from their dens in terror wild,
To where our struggling hero, badly soused,
Was rolling yet and bawling like a child.

And some into his coat-sleeves swam and stayed,
And down his only boot leg creeped a pack;
A little perch into his pocket strayed,
A slippery eel slid down his flinching back.

At last the Major crept out to the bank,
He sat upon a log and sucked his paw;
The trees and moss looked down upon him frank,
A crow which flew above cawed, "Haw! Haw! Haw!"

At length the Major rose up from his seat
"And slowly homeward plod his weary way,"
While every person on the road he'd meet
Would look at him and cry, "Oh, Hay, Hay, Hay!"

And from that day our hero's been
A very altered man,
He says the fair sex led him in
To dangers which he ran.

So from the ladies ever since
He's kept himself away,
And from his books he does not wince
So here I end my lay!

ODE TO NARCISSA.

ANACREONTIC.

[Written at College, while sixteen years old. Also read from the Euphradian Reading Box.]

Dreaming in a rustic chair
Placed beneath a shade-tree fair,
On a sultry Summer's day,
Methought I saw Narcissa stray
From out the house to where I slept,
When softly up to me she crept,
And on my willing lips she pressed
A kiss as sweet as nectar blessed!
Forthwith with sudden rapture rent
At this sweet gift so coyly sent
Up from the seat I sprang with haste
And cried, "Another on me waste!"
But with this cry the dream fell off,
And waking up with many a scoff,
To find it all a trance and naught,
And that I was by Cupid caught,
Straight to this God I cried aloud
And to him then and there I vowed,
By all things dear to me on earth,
His golden arrow sent in mirth
Forth from my heart to never pluck,
But with Narcissa try my luck!

A NEGRO VALENTINE.*

[*The lines below were the first ever composed by the author. He wrote them when ten years of age for a family servant, a negress, to send to one of the colored men on his father's place. This man aspired to be a dandy, shirked work whenever able, and loafed so much in the kitchen that this woman was accused of attracting him quite as much as the victuals. Indignant at being thus teased, she asked the author to write her a "letter" warning him off. The author, as it was near the 14th February, suggested a valentine as the better plan, and it being urged by the family (to tease him) that it ought to be in rhyme, he set to work and to their surprise produced the lines below, which the woman duly mailed the loafer. They worked a cure, for when, at his request, we read them to him on his getting them, he suspected she had sent them, and, taking it as a *casus belli*, he shunned her and the kitchen some time.]

To ANDERSON:

You think yourself so fine
That you try to cut a shine,
But I think you're mistaken,
So you'd better save your bacon,
For you loaf around the kitchen,
Wont work with the men,
And I'll give you a switchin',
If you come here again!

VALENTINE.

A FRAGMENT.

JUVENILE.

* * * *

Oh! Byron was with anger not more rife
When first he felt the coarse reviewer's knife,
And he that sang the Dunciad's lay not more
Wrought up to pay the Grub street pack its score,
Than I'll be ready, when shall come the time,
To take my vengeance for your similar crime!
We have a score to settle deep as hell,
And I will force the issue sternly, well!
Your crowd, yes every individual name,
Though, Cottle-like, too greasy, coarse for fame,
Unflinchingly, relentless, up I'll hold
To execrations just and manifold.
You yet shall hear of how with impious hand,
Like the base Indian[18] of the roaming band,
You did not halt to throw a pearl away
Than all your tribe more rich, as worthless clay.
So think not then that you have put me down,
When you suppress my efforts, on me frown!
The world moved on, Galileo's law was true
Despite the Inquisition's cry and hue.
They burnt the books of Luther, hurled the bull
Of excommunication 'gainst him full;
But who's most famous, Luther or the crowd
Of churchmen, who the heretic would have cowed?
—You've scotched the snake, not killed it, like Macbeth,
'Tis the old tale of honest Wickliffe's death:
"To Severn flows the Avon, both to sea,
His dust shall spread where'er the waters be."

You know not whom you slighted. When the band
Of pirates once found Bacchus on the strand,
They bore him off, resolved to sell the lad
To slavery's life, and to their riches add.
But presently the fated vessel stopped,
The youth—a god disclosed—above them topped;
The tiger, lynx and panther round him stood,
Green vines twined up all round the vessel's wood.
Then terror-stricken at the monstrous thing
Which they had done, all haste o'erboard to spring,
And changed to dolphins pondered long and well,
That sometimes worth 'neath modest looks may dwell.

NOTES.

1. "District" was the appellation given to Counties by law in South Carolina, prior to 1868.

1*a*. The first Monday in every month is known as "Sales Day" in South Carolina, being set aside by law as the time on which all judicial sales must be made at the Court House door of each County by the Sheriff and other officers. On Sales Days thousands of people, white and black, throng in on foot or horseback, or in buggies, to the County towns, to sell produce, cotton, eggs, chickens, &c., swap horses or buggies, buy goods, talk to the lawyers and merchants, to drink and to fight.

2. See Macaulay's Milton: "Ariosto tells a pretty story," &c.

3. See also Macaulay's Milton.

4. See Wordsworth; Rob Roy's Grave.

4*a*. Since the preparation of this volume for the printer, the Grand Jury of Charleston County have made in reference to their jail a presentment in which my strictures on jails are strikingly confirmed. See News and Courier of February 29, 1884.

5. "And maidens with such eyes as would grow dim over a bleeding hound."—TIMROD, Charleston.

6. This refers to the origin of Charleston's name, of course.

7. Horace: "Dulce et decorum," &c.

8. Boswell's Johnson, *anno* 1776.

9. See George Eliot, Mrs. Wilson (*nee* Evans), and Byron.

10. A favorite doctrine of Herbert Spencer's.

10*a*. See Trevelyan's Life and Letters, as to Macaulay's precocity.

11. "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple."—TEMPEST, i, 2.

12. Labor saving machines, says Bagehot, "have enabled more people to exist, but these people work just as hard," &c.—PHYSICS AND POLITICS, v.

13. "The atrocious crime of being a young man."—LORD CHATHAM, Speech, March 6, 1741.

14. "Think how Bacon shined. The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind."—POPE, 4 Epistle, 281.

"For my name and memory, I leave it to * * * * foreign nations, and to the next ages."—BACON'S WILL.

15. Longfellow's Psalm of Life.

16. The great Krupp gun in Machinery Hall is alluded to.

17. "Fixed like a plant on his peculiar spot,
To draw nutrition, propagate and rot."—POPE, 2 Epistle, 63.

18. "Of one whose hand
Like the base Indian threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe."—OTHELLO, v. 2.

THE END.

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